

November 2008

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Civic Association News, Annual Dues, Annual Meeting Coming Up

Our appeal for annual dues will be coming to your home soon. We appreciate all your contributions that help our efforts to produce high quality reporting of civic events. ***You help us achieve our goals by joining as a dues-paying member.***

The Harding Township Civic Association serves an unusual role in the community. The goals of the Association have been to foster public interest in government, and to assist in achieving and maintaining ***good mutual understanding between citizens and public officials, to promote knowledge and appreciation of public problems through non-partisan publicity and to inform, arouse and lead public opinion toward the solution of public problems.*** To these ends, and for over 50 years, the Civic Association is staffed by volunteers who attend and report on many of the official doings of the Township government. These reports appear in The Thumbnail, the monthly newsletter which you are reading. Although the Civic Association asks you, and everyone living or working in the Township to join the Civic Association as a dues-paying member, the Thumbnail is mailed to every home in Harding Township, regardless of whether or not you contribute.

If you would like to participate more actively in the Civic Association, please let us know who you are. We are currently soliciting nominations for new members to the Board of Trustees. This group meets monthly. All members make a commitment to cover a Township meeting, sometimes as infrequently as bimonthly, sometimes semi-monthly, take notes on the proceedings, then send in a write up to the Thumbnail. By covering and disseminating information on the workings of the Township government, you serve others who cannot attend meetings, but who are vitally interested. If you are interested, send an Email to the editor, hesnaj@verizon.net, or write The Harding Township Civic Association, PO Box 72, New Vernon, NJ 07976, or come to the next meeting, at Kirby Hall, **7:30 PM, Monday December 1.**

The **Civic Association Annual Meeting is usually the first Monday in February at 7:30 PM**, in the Township Hall. The exact date will be announced later. There will be a brief business meeting, including election of the nominees for the Board of trustees: current candidates are: Barbara Brennen and Scott Shipley. Dev Modi had been elected in the fall to fill an empty seat.

**SPECIAL REPORT FROM THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION: the current
Financial Crisis and Its Impact on Harding**

Even little Harding, with its simple and conservative finances, can get roiled in the global financial storm. It appears that our ship is seaworthy but Trenton isn't helping.

The municipal bond market is not welcoming of new issues. But because it has no need to tap it, Harding is not at risk of being locked out of the bond market. And Harding doesn't borrow from banks (it can't by statute), so it can't have a credit line pulled. Harding's two existing bond issues mature in 2016 and 2028 – heaven help us if the markets are still in turmoil then! The Township was fortunate to execute its last bond issue in February 2008, near the low in rates.

However, Harding has a \$2.1mn Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) coming due in less than 4 months (2-20-09). BANs are used by municipalities for smaller and shorter financings. The Township expects to repay about 75% of our BAN with an Open Space payment from the State/County. This payment should arrive in December or January. The balance is to be paid-off or rolled-over (i.e. refinanced with a new BAN). Though there was a period recently when some municipalities had difficulty rolling over BANs, Harding's bond attorney says that the BAN market has returned to normal. So if our BAN needs to be rolled, it seems doable.

On the asset side of its ledger, Harding's working cash is held at TD Bank (formerly Commerce Bank which was acquired by TD Financial Group, formerly Toronto Dominion). At the end of September, Harding had a cash balance of almost \$10mm – Harding holds the cash (and enjoys the interest on the float) from school and county taxes until those entities are paid. The account is protected up to \$100,000 by the FDIC and by the Government Unit Deposit Protection Act (NJ State deposit insurance for municipalities and agencies) for amounts over \$100,000. So Harding's money is safe and is not at risk from the unprecedented turmoil in the money markets – no "buck breaking" here.

However, these accounts earn interest at a floating rate. Since the Federal Reserve has slashed interest rates to help stave off financial collapse, those funds are earning less interest – over 3% less than a year ago. With an average balance of about \$7mn, Harding could earn about \$200K less interest income over the course of a year. This shortfall is not overwhelming but is still important in context of an \$8.7mn municipal budget that doesn't have a lot of slack in it, according to the Township Committee. Looked at another way, \$200K is \$106 per tax paying entity.

Another important impact on Harding will be from the disastrous performance of the State pension funds. All NJ municipal workers are part of the state pension system and municipalities must fund it based on the number, pay level and service years of their employees. And if investment performance is poor, the municipalities eventually have to make-up the difference. Well, performance has been very poor -- NJ's pension fund lost \$5.3 bn in September, sliding to \$70.7 bn. October certainly showed another big loss. In the 12 months through September, the NJ pension fund lost \$12 bn. Last year, even before the storm hit, the largest expense increase in the 2008 Harding budget was for pensions – up \$138K, almost a 58% increase. Similarly large or larger increases are likely in store for future years.

One can speculate on longer term, but difficult to quantify, effects of the financial crisis and economic downturn. For instance, tighter lending by banks and income hits to securities industry professionals will likely slow housing turnover. For the same reasons, new building will likely decrease. This would crimp the fees that Harding collects on property transactions, renovations and new construction. Further, the Township expects to have more trouble than normal collecting property taxes, but Harding's strong reputation will help it to sell tax liens.

THE LIBRARY

Storytime with Jennifer Carlin...don't miss out on the fun! Tuesdays at 10 a.m. in the Municipal Building's small conference room. November happenings: **11/18**, *Bunnies*; **11/25**, *Firefighters and Police Officers*. There are some exciting special events coming up, including an American Girl Party in January—watch for the announcements.

Two exciting new children's DVDs are on the shelf. For pre-schoolers, *Bob the Builder on Site* shows how to build a fantasy new library from the ground up—a timely lesson! For older viewers, Indiana Jones returns! Check out *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*.

Evening Book Club... Wednesday, November 19 at 7:30 p.m. If you enjoy reading and like to talk about what you read, then this evening book group is for you! Our selection this month is Daphne du Maurier's classic thriller, *Rebecca*. All are welcome.

Holiday Shopping...bargain books are on sale daily on the Library's book cart...a constantly changing selection of hardcover, quality paperbacks, and general interest paperbacks in good condition. *It's the best bargain in town!*

hardinglibrary.org...your online source for up-to-date information: book

reviews, children's programs and new titles, OverDrive ebooks, online catalog, Library hours, books on order, and more.

Harding Township Residents-(from the Township administrator office)--If you are receiving unsolicited distribution of newspapers from the Star-Ledger, including Ledger Extra, you can cease delivery of these materials by sending a "Do Not Deliver" request to Bill Marshall at BMarshall@StarLedger.com.

FROM THE HARDING TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE: A CALL TO SERVE

HARDING: The Township Committee welcomes citizens willing to serve on the Boards, Commissions, and Committees that support the governance of Harding . If you are excited by the possibility of contributing your time and talents to your town, we need to hear from you. Service opportunities (and their meeting times -- usually monthly) are listed on both the Township web site (www.Hardingnj.org) and in the Harding Township Civic Association Directory. And if the natural beauty and architectural history of Harding are your passion, you should know that the **Shade Tree Committee**, the **Historical Preservation Commission** and the **Bayne Park Committee are especially in need of volunteers**. Interested citizens should contact Cindy Phillips, administrative assistant (973-267-8000 ext. 147 or cphillips@hardingnj.org) or any member of the Township Committee.

From the Harding Twp. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Deer/Motor Vehicle Accidents

Precautions: When you see a deer entering the roadway, do not watch where the deer is going but rather where it is coming from. More likely than not, there are others following, and they might enter the roadway too. Try not to swerve upon encountering a deer! You might hit a fixed object such as a telephone pole or a tree, resulting in serious injuries. Travel slowly in the evening hours when vision is limited. When a car in front of you brakes or slows down, do the same. It is possible that the driver has spotted a deer about to enter the roadway.

Accidents: If you have a collision with a deer, pull the vehicle off the road with 4-way flashers on. If in Harding Twp. call the Harding Twp. Police at (973) 455 0500, or 911 if you are elsewhere. Wait for the police to arrive. They will take a report and provide other assistance.

Dealing with Coyotes and Foxes

Coyotes and foxes have been sighted in the township with increasing frequency. Of particular concern are coyotes. The Wildlife Services Section of

the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife advises that coyote attacks on humans are rare in the Northeast. Coyote nuisance and damage situations are managed taking preventive measures. These include removing potential food sources such as garbage and birdfeed. Also, pets should not be fed outdoors, nor should they be left outdoors overnight. Sightings alone should not cause alarm but are a signal to take preventive measures. Significant damage and nuisance coyote problems should be reported to the NJ state Wildlife Services Section at (908) 735-8793

TOWNSHIP NEWS

Township Committee Meeting – October 22, 2008

Attending: Bartlett, Lanzerotti, Rybka, Ward; Absent: Murray

Future Meetings:

November 5th Meeting – CANCELED

November 19th Meeting – decision on Mt Kemble Rec fields and

COAH Plan

Ordinances:

1. Accept donation of ½ acre next to Bayne Park from Blanchards. Hearing next month.
2. Eggert Property purchase (approx 7 acres) on Route 202. Purchase price of \$625K includes \$125K from the Harding Open Space Trust Fund (a property tax funded entity) with the balance from Morris County Open Space and NJ Green Acres monies. Approximately \$200K of the purchase price is being put into escrow to cover the cost of demolishing structures on the property – twice the estimated cost. Property may ultimately be donated to the National Park Service as it abuts Jockey Hollow.
3. Hire to fill vacancy in the Dept of Public Works. An operator/mechanic position was replaced with a laborer/driver (\$33K compensation), saving \$19K. The position was advertised and over 10 applicants were reviewed.
4. On-line Auction of surplus property. Following the success of using on-line auction last year, Harding will again use the internet to liquidate 4 vehicles and some file cabinets. Vehicles are 3 police cars ('96, '98, '05 Ford Crown Victoria's) and an F-250 pick up truck. The site www.govdeals.com, which charges a 7% to the seller, will be used. Due to the wide distribution of the internet, sellers typically get a higher realization than from a physical auction.

5. Settlement of Land Fill Litigation – cost \$65K to Harding. This is the result of a major environmental suit that arose from dumping in a landfill in Washington Township. Many towns as well as corporations were caught up in this suit, Harding because some of the garbage was traced to the Township. Harding's obligation under the settlement was one of the smallest while largest were over \$1mm. Of the \$65K charge to Harding, insurance will pay about \$44K. Even the remaining \$21K may ultimately be paid insurance, though that is less certain as the policy dates to the 1970's.

Reports:

1. Transportation – Marshall Bartlett attended at meeting with the NJ Transportation Authority to try to get funding for a parking garage in Madison. Both funding and a location are problematic. Several towns had interest. This will be a long effort.
2. Regional Animal Control and Sheltering. Health Dept administrator, Garry Annibal, investigated the shared services cost savings opportunity (i.e. combining with other towns to save money) in this function. Conclusion was that it would cost Harding more than what we currently pay to use St Hubert's.

Hearing Persons Present

A short discussion was held regarding a recent Observer Tribune article that suggested that the original use for the Glen Alpin property acquisition was for a library but that the Harding Township Library group foiled that plan by deciding to build a brand new structure. The Observer Tribune even referenced two committee persons (Bartlett and Murray) to that effect.

Ned Ward corrected the distinct impression left by the newspaper article by noting that the Library Group rejected Glen Alpin as a potential site fully 6-7 months prior to its purchase. Rejection of Glen Alpin was supported by a recommendation from the Rosen Group - architects, Summit - who determined that the building was neither suitable nor structurally appropriate for a library.

Marshall Bartlett, one of the committee persons who was referenced in the article, apologized to the Library Committee. He said he was tasked by the Glen Alpin Strategy Committee (a group working to find a solution/use for Glen Alpin) to get publicity for the availability of the property for a long term lease by a non-profit. He said that he told the Observer Tribune that "the Township doesn't have adequate use for Glen Alpin and it would have been different if the Library had wanted to use." He said it was definitely not his intention to imply that the Library had reneged on any deal, formal or informal.

The Request for Proposal document (Glen Alpin Adaptive RFP) that calls for proposals from parties interested in leasing Glen Alpin is now available on the Harding Township website, www.hardingnj.org.

Board of Adjustment, October 16, 2008

Resolutions – Approved

Robert Tallaksen d/b/a Tallaksen Construction (Contract Purchaser), N.J. Audobon Society (Owner), 137 Lee's Hill Road, Block 51, Lot 8, Zone RR

Pending Application

Daniel and Samantha Anderson, 613 Van Beuren Road, Block 5 Lot 7.09 Zone RR, "C" Variance

Edward Clark, a licensed landscape architect, testified on behalf of the applicant. Proposed vegetation was discussed and evergreens will be used extensively to provide screening. Again, there were several comments from the public against the granting of variances. There was a question as to whether a maintenance requirement, for the landscaping, could be included in the resolution. The Board felt that a maintenance requirement would be overreaching. The application was recommended for approval with changes.

New Applications

Peter and Ellen Eppie, 566 Tempe Wick Road, Block 34, Lot 8, Zone RR, "C" and "D" Variances

A variance is needed for a second story addition and new deck onto an existing garage. Variances are needed for side setbacks and because the garage is an existing non-conforming structure. The property was granted variances in the past for a pool and the subject garage. The home is well screened and situated on a flag lot. A waiver was granted by the Board to hear the application without prior Board of Health approval. Approval from the Board of Health is still necessary. A new septic system will be installed for the proposed addition. The application was recommended for approval.

Board of Education, October 6 and October 20, 2008:

The board goals for 2008-2009 were presented on the BOE meeting on Oct 6th and are summarized below:

- a) Evaluate different approaches for writing new curriculum,
- b) Develop a public relations committee to increase the community involvement in school sponsored activities (one example that was given was a project to help support building a well in an African village),

- c) Evaluate the schools attuned program to assess where we stand with regard to the schools progress towards goals. (this program , also known as one mind at a time, was started at Harding last year and is based on Dr. Mel Levine's work, that focuses on students variations in attention, memory, language, problem-solving, idea generation, motor skills, social skills and behavior, and working with students' individual slates of strengths and weaknesses.

At the October 20th meeting Ms Colleen Bewalder and Ms. Dawn Pollack (Guidance Conselor and School Psychologist , respectively) summarized the Schools anti-bullying program. On average, 1 out of 5 students is bullied at school. The program at Harding included 45 in class presentations, additional teacher training, informational packets for parents, a guest lecture by Michael Fallon and extensive use of colorful posters throughout the school.

Other noteworthy items are :

- i) The new Business administrator, Mr. James Minkewicz has been hired and was scheduled to start on Oct. 28th.
- ii) In response to a question from Ms. Elizabeth DeCotis (Chair of Negotiations and Teacher Representative) the Board has approved the new contract for the teachers for the 08-09, 09-10, 10-11 years.
- iii) Superintendent, Dr. Timothy Purnell has started a blog to increase community awareness and to gain more input from the public (you can access this from the Superintendent's corner on the Harding webpage : www.hardingtwp.org)

Planning Board, October 27, 2008

In attendance: Thomas dePoortere, Robert Edgar, Isobel Olcott, John Murray, David Dietz, Peter Saulnier, Alf Newlin, Gary Hall, Susan Kimball, Paul Fox, Cindy Phillips. Absent: Carol Vellekamp, Marshall Bartlett, Virginia Moriarty
Isobel Olcott ran the meeting in Carol Vellekamp's absence.

Board of Adjustment Recommendation- The first item on the agenda was a recommendation from the Board of Adjustment for an ordinance to modify the Zoning Ordinance. This modification would allow owners of residential structures that are non-conforming only with regard to setback limitations, to be able to alter the structure provided the alteration conforms to the district's zoning requirements with respect to setbacks and all other zoning regulations of the district in which it is located. Owners would no longer have to go to the Board of

Adjustment, but instead could just apply for their construction permits. This only applies if the alteration conforms to all zoning regulations for the district where the structure is located. Gary Hall noted that there were a few cases each year where this occurs and this would save the homeowner about \$1,000 and the additional time required for the approval.

A second section of the ordinance clarified dealing with non conforming lot sizes. If only the lot size is non-conforming, but the proposed one family dwelling conforms to all zoning for the district in which it is located, the owner does not need to go to the Board of Adjustment. A draft ordinance was provided. The Planning Board recommended unanimously to send the draft ordinance to the Township Committee for approval.

Storage Containers (PODS)

Karen Zaborsky, Harding's Zoning Officer requested clarification and a policy with regard to external storage containers. The town was receiving calls asking about the rules with regard to storage containers such as PODS. It was decided that an ordinance would be too difficult to enforce and the town would rather handle the matter administratively. Paul Fox will inquire about external items such as dumpsters and porta-potty locations when building applications are made. Paul said he would speak to Mary Ellen Balady, Harding's Construction Official and ask that she also inquire about external storage requirements when a resident applies for a construction permit.

Draft Community Facilities Plan-

A draft was presented by Susan Kimball for the Community Facilities Plan. Once approved the Plan would be added to Harding's Master Plan. The goal of the plan was to identify existing facilities, assess their adequacy and incorporate recommendations if additional needs are identified. The plan addressed the town buildings, water for fire protection, fire and rescue, police, utility service, and school. Included in the plan is a complete GIS map that shows the water sources and water lines that will be included in the Master Plan. The Plan foresees no major expansion of the community facilities or public utility structure. Recommendations included relocating the tennis courts to the school, upgrading the town's website, reconfiguration of the DPW facilities, exploring shared services with other communities, and establishment of a community parking area to facilitate linkage with mass transit.

Affordable Housing Update-

Susan Kimball presented a draft of the township's revised third round Housing Element & Fair Share Plan. The Affordable Housing Subcommittee reviewed the options available under COAH rules to address the 35 unit

projected growth share obligation. To satisfy 10 of the 35 units, the subcommittee recommended using affordable accessory units. It is estimated that there are already between 30-50 accessory buildings in town. Although COAH expects new units to be built, Susan Kimball thought that they would accept existing vacant units, since the goal is to provide affordable housing.

Current zoning allows a new accessory building to be built in RR and R1 zones on lots of 6 acres or more. There was some discussion of reducing the lot requirement to 5 acres for new COAH housing only. That was the only point in the plan that the Planning Board did not agree on. The reasoning for lowering the requirement to 5 acres was to increase the number of potential participants. There are two major benefits to the town: using accessory housing integrates the affordable housing into the community and the town would not need to purchase additional land.

Six more COAH units would come from Supportive/Special Needs Housing. For Special needs housing, each bedroom in a residence is counted as one unit. The subcommittee has met with two sponsors of housing for individuals with special needs and will assist each in locating property to establish one or more homes for qualified individuals. The township may need to provide a subsidy for acquisition and renovation.

Finally, it was recommended that 2 new rental units be constructed. Susan Kimball suggested adding the two units at The Farm if possible. This would provide the necessary credits and the town would not need to acquire additional property.

Public comment on the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan will be taken at the next Planning Board Meeting on November, 24. The draft will be available 10 days prior to the meeting on the Harding website www.hardingnj.org.

Historic Preservation Comm, No report

Civic Association: The **DEADLINES FOR THE next 2 issues OF THE THUMBNAIL December 5 and January 9**, respectively. Current and past issues of Thumbnail, as well as the Directory are also on our Website:

<http://www.hardingcivic.org>. Send questions or comments about Thumbnail to editor, **email address: hesnaj@verizon.net**, or the Harding Township Civic Association, PO Box 72, New Vernon, NJ 07976.

TOWNSHIP RECYCLING

Commingled Recyclables: consists of all aluminum and tin cans, glass bottles, and only plastic bottles and containers with the Recycling symbol, and #1 or #2. Try to crush plastic bottle to conserve space. Please remember no plastic or paper bags. **Commingled Mixed Paper recycling;** consists of all paper, cardboard, newspaper, office paper, magazines, and books. Please put loose or shredded paper in paper bag. Please flatten all boxes or fill with other paper products.

Other accepted items; Batteries; automotive (car) and household (rechargeable accepted); Computers and all related peripherals, i.e. printers and monitors; Automotive and light truck tires, (on or off rim) and Propane tanks (BBQ size only)

The Hours of operation are every Wednesday from 7AM. to noon (7– 9AM self service); and **Saturdays: 11/22, 12/6,12/20, 9AM to noon.**

DATES TO REMEMBER, meetings as noted.

Municipal Court (1 st and 3 rd Tuesday)	3 PM
Municipal Court (2 nd and 4 th Friday)	11AM
Environmental Commission (1 st Monday)	7:30 PM
Seniors (2 nd and 4 th Thursday)Chrst KingCh	11 AM
Planning Board (4 th Monday)	7:30 PM
Hist Preservtion Comm (1stThursday)	8 PM
Board of Health (2 nd Thursday)	8 PM
Board of Education (2 nd and 4 th Monday)	7:30 PM
Board of Adjustment (3 rd Thursday)	7:30 PM
Township Committee(1 st and 3 rd Wed)	7:30 PM
Shade Tree (2 nd Monday)	3 PM
Harding Twp Civic Association (1 st Monday)	7:30 PM